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ABSTRACT

This publication provides information that can support parents in their efforts to assist their young children's literacy development. Provided in a format that can be copied, these "literacy tips" are supplied for these three age groups: ages 0-3, ages 4-6, and ages 7-8 and are preceded by lists of ideas for using them in a family literacy program. The lists are divided into the same three age groups. Each group of tips offers a few major developmental milestones, some suggestions for age-appropriate parent support, tips about the kind of books children might enjoy, and a short list of book titles appropriate for children at that age level. A list of six Web sites that contain research-based suggestions for parents and that are written to be accessible for parents in family literacy programs is also included. (YLB)

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literacy tips for children

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Family literacy professionals frequently comment that parents are their children's first and most important teachers. Programs focus on helping parents develop the skills, attitudes, and habits needed to make family interactions around books, reading, and writing productive and enjoyable. Yet many parents may be unaware of young children's developmental progression toward proficiency as readers and writers. And having this information can support parents in their efforts to assist their young children's literacy development.

We prepared these "Literacy Tips" in a format that can be copied and used in family literacy programs. Each one addresses children at different ages (0-3, 4-6, and 7-8). Each offers a few major developmental milestones, some suggestions for age-appropriate parent support, tips about the kind of books children might enjoy (adapted from material available from the National Association for the Education of Young Children), and a short list of book titles appropriate for children at that age level. A list of WWW sites that contain research-based suggestions for parents written to be accessible for parents in family literacy programs is also included.

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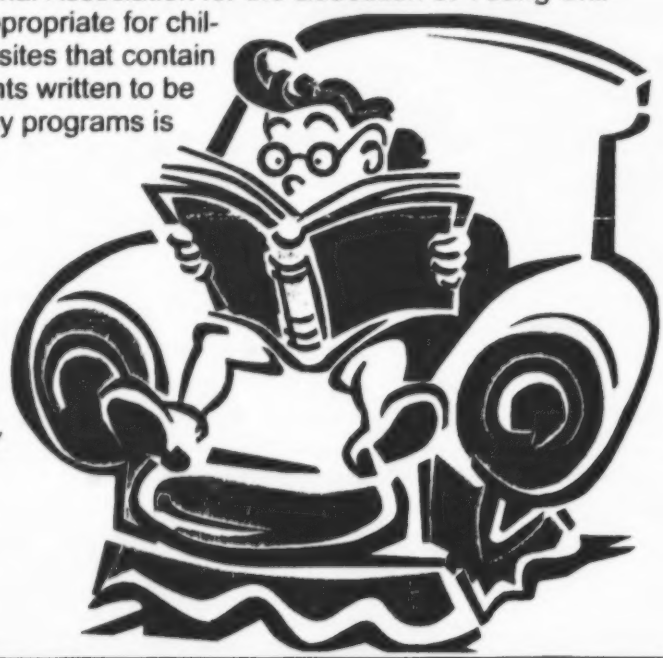

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Here are a few ideas for using these "Literacy Tips" in a family literacy program.

Children Ages 0-3

- Parents may want to keep sleep diaries or language diaries and then share what they discover about their children's sleep patterns or language development with others.
- Parents may want to keep track of developmental milestones (e.g., first babble, first word, first step). These can be charted for the whole group, and discussion can focus on differences and the meaning of the differences.
- Parents can collect little songs to sing to (or with) their children. These can be collected into songbooks for all to use. Parents can also collect little clapping games (e.g., Pat-A-Cake) and likewise collect and publish these.
- Parents can brainstorm different common household objects that a) are safe for children to play with, and b) represent different sizes, textures, etc.
- Parents can collect very simple picture books with bright colors and prominent photographs. They can practice reading these as they would to their children.

Children Ages 4-6

- Parents can collect and learn Mother Goose rhymes. These can be illustrated and made into a class book. Songbooks can also be developed (e.g., People on the Bus).
- Parents can practice telling stories.
- Parents can keep track of the books they read aloud to their children over a period of time (perhaps 2 weeks). They can also note whether the children enjoyed the books. They can then use this information to draw conclusions about their children's developing book preferences.
- The group can take several trips to the public library, so that parents become comfortable there and can find the location of book collections likely to be of interest to their children.
- Parents can collect and date their children's writing. After several months, they can compare earlier to later pieces of writing and draw conclusions about their children's growth.
- Parents can practice reading simple books while simultaneously tracking the print with their fingers.

Children Ages 7-8

Many of the activities in the 4-6 age range also apply here. In addition,

- Parents should begin allowing children some freedom in book selection at the library. Parents can keep track of how this works for them and share successes and problems in their family literacy classes.
- Parents can find or make word games. In their family literacy classes, they can make the game pieces, talk through rules, and take the games home to play with their children.
- Parents and children can make books together.

Literacy Tips for Children

0-3 Years Old

What to Look For

From birth to eight months, a baby will

- react to your voice.
- laugh and babble.
- make noises to show interest and to get your attention.
- learn to understand names of common people and things.

From 8 months to 18 months (1 ½ years), a baby

- may be able to say 2 or 3 words.
- will babble in long strings that sound like sentences.
- can understand many words.
- will make noises to get help or to get your attention.
- will look at picture books with you.

Toddlers (18 months – 3 years)

- may be able to say 200 different words.
- will put words together in simple sentences.
- will know the names of many common things in the house.
- will enjoy listening to stories for short periods of time.
- will begin to play pretend games.

How Families Can Help

- Learning begins with good health. Good food and enough sleep are important.
- Spend time with your child. Play with him or her. Include your child in family activities.
- Talk to your child all the time. Sing. Whisper. Make different sounds. Play singing and clapping games.
- Let your child play with toys that have different shapes and that feel different, like teddy bears and pillows.
- Let your child see you reading and writing.
- Teach your child ideas like Up-Down or In-Out. When you swing your child in play, say "Up we go! Down we go!"
- Look at picture books with your child. Young children like books with big, bold pictures. Point to things in the books. When your child starts to talk, ask him or her to find things in the book ("Where's the truck?").

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What Kind of Books to Look for (Ages 0 - 3)

- Cloth or vinyl books that are easy to clean
- Books with bright, simple pictures and patterns
- Board books with thick pages
- Books with familiar objects
- Books with songs or simple stories
- Stories about things that happen in your child's life: going to bed, being a messy eater, missing mom
- Predictable books

Good Books for Children (0-3 Years Old)

Ahlberg, Janet & Ahlberg, Allan. *Peek-a-Boo.* Viking, 1981.

Asch, Frank. *Mooncake.* Simon & Schuster, 1986.

Aylesworth, Jim. *The Goodnight Kiss.* Atheneum, 1993.

Brown, Marc. *Hand Rhymes.* Dutton, 1985.

Brown, Margaret Wise. *Goodnight Moon.* HarperCollins, 1947.

Burningham, John. *The Blanket.* Crowell, 1976.

Chorao, Kay. *Baby's Lap Book.* Dutton, 1977.

Crews, Donald. *Freight Train.* Greenwillow, 1978.

Daly, Niki. *Not So Fast, Songololo.* Atheneum, 1986.

DePaola, Tomie. *Tomie DePaola's Mother Goose.* Putnam, 1985.

Hill, Eric. *Where's Spot?* Putnam, 1980.

Hoban, Tana. *1, 2, 3.* Greenwillow, 1985.

Isadora, Rachel. *I See.* Greenwillow, 1985.

Johnson, Angela. *Mama Bird, Baby Bird.* Orchard, 1994.

Kunhardt, Dorothy. *Pat the Bunny.* Golden, 1962 (1940).

Ople, Iona. *My Very First Mother Goose.* Candlewick Press, 1996.

Ormerod, Helen. *Friends.* Simon & Schuster, 1981.

Watanabe, Shifeo. *How Do I Put It On?* Philomel, 1979.

Wells, Rosemary. *Max's Bedtime.* Dial, 1985.

Literacy Tips for Children

4-6 Years Old

What to Look For

- Your child will show interest in books and ask adults to read to him or her.
- Your child may have favorite books and authors. Your child may ask for favorite books to be read again and again.
- Your child will guess about what will happen in a story. You can help by asking, "What do you think is going to happen?"
- Your child may ask questions about stories, make comments about stories, and connect stories to his or her life.
- Your child may like to retell or act out stories or parts of stories.
- Your child will pretend to read.
- Your child will learn that we read the print, not the pictures. He or she will begin to look at the print when someone reads a book your child knows.
- Your child will scribble or pretend to write. Over time, he or she will begin to use letters. By kindergarten, your child will begin to use sounds to write letters. For example, the word "ball" might be written "B" or "BL."
- Your child will begin to learn the ABCs. By the end of kindergarten, she or he will know all the letters, know some words by sight, and know how to rhyme.

How Families Can Help

- Point out print in everyday life--the back of the cereal box, toys, fast food restaurants, traffic signals. This helps children learn that print is all around them.
- Sing songs, say little poems or Mother Goose rhymes, and play rhyming word games with your child. Rhyming will become important as children learn to read.
- Tell stories to your child.
- Read aloud to your child. Point to the words on the page. Move your finger from left to right as you read.
- Ask older children to read to younger children.
- Ask your child to read to you (or to pretend-read to you). Make this reading fun. Don't worry if your child does not read all the words right. Make sure your child knows that you think he or she is a good reader.
- Go to the library together. Check out books together. The librarian can help you find good books for your child.
- Have books, magazines, and newspapers around the house. Let your child see that you like to read.
- Ask your child to write. Ask your child to read the writing to you. Praise him or her for being such a good writer. Don't worry about spelling.

What Kind of Books to Look for (Ages 4-6)

- Stories that rhyme
- Stories that repeat sentences and words
- Adventures or silly stories
- Books about giants, monsters, dinosaurs, machines, and animals acting like people
- Books with poems

Good Books for Children (4-6 Years Old)

Bemelmans, Ludwig. *Madeline*. Viking, 1977

Brett, Jan. *The Mitten*. Putnam, 1989.

Brown, Marcia. *Stone Soup*. Aladdin, 1987.

Cannon, Janell. *Stellaluna*. Harcourt Brace, 1993.

DeRegniers, Beatrice. (Ed.). *Sing a Song of Popcorn: Every Child's Book of Poems*. Scholastic, 1988.

Dr. Seuss. *The Cat in the Hat*. Random House, 1957.

Eastman, P.D. *Go Dog, Go!* Random House, 1961.

Freeman, Don. *Corduroy*. Viking, 1985.

Hoberman, Mary Ann. *A House is a House for Me*. Viking, 1982.

Jordon, Martin, and Jordon, Tannis. *Amazon Alphabet*. Kingfisher, 1996.

McCloskey, Robert. *Blueberries for Sal*. Viking, 1976.

McCloskey, Robert. *Make Way for Ducklings*. Viking, 1941.

McDonald, Megan. *My House Has Stars*. Orchard, 1996.

Numeroff, Laura. *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*. HarperCollins, 1991.

Pinkney, Andrea. *Bill Pickett—Rodeo-Riding Cowboy*. Gulliver, 1996.

Viorst, Judith. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. Alladin, 1992.

Williams, Vera B. *Cherries and Cherry Pits*. Greenwillow, 1986.

Wood, Audrey. *The Napping House*. Harcourt Brace, 1991.

Young, Ed. *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China*. Philomel, 1989.

Zion, Gene. *Harry the Dirty Dog*. HarperCollins, 1956.

Literacy Tips for Children

7-8 Years Old

What to Look For

- Your child will begin to read. He or she will know some words by sight and figure out other words by sounding them out and checking to see if the guesses make sense.
- Your child will begin to read evenly, with expression.
- Your child will know about the parts of books. He or she will also know about different types of books, such as made up stories or true stories.
- Your child will be able to tell you about what he or she has read.
- Your child will read for fun and to learn. He or she will have favorite kinds of books or favorite authors.
- Your child will write notes, sentences, letters, and paragraphs. More words will be spelled right. Your child's writing will get longer. You will be able to read what your child has written.

How Families Can Help

- Ask open-ended questions, such as "What do you think? Why?" to help your child become a good problem-solver.
- Make reading and writing something that happens everyday in your home. Let your child see you reading and writing. Encourage your child to read and write during free time.
- Visit the public library every week. Help your child get his or her own library card. Help your child check out books, books on tape, puzzles, etc.
- Read to your child every day, even after your child learns to read.
- Listen to your child read. Help him or her with tricky words by saying, "Skip it and read to the end of the sentence. Now try again—what makes sense that looks like the word that you see?" Tell your child he or she is a good reader.
- Play word games, such as thinking of different words to describe the same thing, 20 Questions, or I Spy.
- Support your child's writing. Have writing materials, such as paper, markers, or notebooks. Read what your child writes. Tell your child she or he is a good writer.
- Limit TV to no more than 2 hours per day.

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What Kind of Books to Look for (Ages 7 - 8)

- Books showing how to make things
- Mystery and adventure stories
- Books about collecting things
- Information books

Good Books for Children (Ages 7-8)

Atwater, Richard, and Atwater, Florence. *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. Little Brown, 1988.

Cleary, Beverly. *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*. Camelot, 1992.

DePaola, Tomie. *Strega Nona*. Prentice Hall, 1975.

Hall, Donald. *The Ox-Cart Man*. Live Oaks Media, 1979.

Jackson, Ellen. *Cinder Edna*. Mulberry Books, 1998.

Khalsa, Dayal. *How Pizza Came to Queens*. Crown, 1983.

Lobel, Arnold. *Days with Frog and Toad*. Harper Trophy, 1984.

Milne, A.A. *Now We Are Six*. E.P. Dutton, 1988.

Parish, Peggy. *Amelia Bedelia*. HarperCollins, 1986.

Rey, H.A. *Curious George*. Houghton Mifflin, 1974.

Silverstein, Shel. *The Giving Tree*. HarperCollins, 1986.

Steptoe, John. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1987.

Waber, Bernard. *Ira Sleeps Over*. Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

Waters, Kate. *Sarah Morton's Day: A Day in the Life of a Pilgrim Girl*. Scholastic, 1989.

White, E.B. *Charlotte's Web*. HarperCollins, 1952.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House in the Big Woods*. HarperCollins, 1953.

Web Resources for Parents: Literacy Tips

You will find more information and ideas at these web addresses, which were all active in March 2002. You can print from these web sites if you want your own copies.

Early Childhood Education publications for parents
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI/pubications.html#ECD

Helping Your Child booklets
http://www.ed.gov.pubs/parents/hyc.html

Moving America to the Head of the Class: 50 Simple Things You Can Do
www.ed.gov/pubs/50things

International Reading Association parent brochures (also available in Spanish)
http://www.reading.org/publications/brochures/brochures.html

Strong Families, Strong Schools
http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families/strong

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